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# Annual Report

OF THE

MEDICAL OFFICER

OF HEALTH

FOR THE

Urban District of Northam

IN DEVON

For the year 1940.

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J. EDMUND FRANCIS, M.O.H.  
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BIDEFORD :

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# ANNUAL REPORT, 1940.

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## 1 - Statistics and Social Conditions of the Area

AREA--4391 Acres.

POPULATION—Estimated resident, mid 1940, 6408. X

Number of inhabited houses at end of 1940, according to rate books : 2035. X

Rateable value : £33,000.

Sum represented by a penny rate, £129. Devon

### *Social and Physical Conditions.*

The District is divided into four wards for the purpose of election to the Urban Council.

Appledore has shipbuilding and repairing yards, which employ a large number of hands, and is a favourite sea fishing centre. Northam, Westward Ho! and Orchard Hill wards are chiefly residential; Westward Ho! being a popular seaside resort.

The well-known championship links of the Royal North Devon Golf Club are situated on Northam Burrows, and attract a large number of visitors during the year.

Under the name of Kipling Tors, a hillside overlooking Bideford Bay and situated in the South-western area of Westward Ho! has recently been purchased as part of a Kipling Memorial and handed over to the National Trust. This land is about 18 acres in extent, and is a welcome addition to the free beauties of the district.

## 2—Vital Statistics for 1940.

### *Births and Birth Rate.*

The total of live births in the District was 76, of which 38 were boys and 38 girls. Two boys were illegitimate.

There were 5 still births registered (one boy and 4 girls). One girl was illegitimate.

The live birth rate per 1000 of the population was 11·8, that for England and Wales being 14·6.

The still birth rate per 1000 of the population was ·78, that for England and Wales being ·55.

### *Deaths and Death Rate.*

The total deaths were 86 (34 males and 52 females), but 41 of these were 70 years of age or over.

The death rate per 1000 of the population was 13·4, that for England and Wales being 14·3.

*The following Table gives the causes of death  
in the District during 1940.*

CAUSES	MALES	FEMALES
Cancer ... ..	6	12
Diabetes ... ..		1
Cerebral Hæmorrhage ... ..	2	
Heart Disease... ..	10	17
Other Circulatory Diseases ... ..	1	1
Bronchitis ... ..	4	3
Pneumonia ... ..	2	1
Tuberculosis of Lung ... ..		1
Other Respiratory Diseases ... ..		2
Peptic Ulcer ... ..	2	
Other Digestive Disesases ... ..	2	1
Congenital Malformation... ..	1	
Deaths by Violence ... ..	2	2
All other causes ... ..	2	11
Total ...	34	52

There were no deaths from Measles, Whooping Cough, Puerperal Sepsis, or from Diarrhoea in children under 2 years of age.

### 3—General Provision of Health Services in the Area.

#### (1) *Public Health Officers of the Authority.*

There are three Public Health Officers for the Council—the Medical Officer of Health, the Sanitary Inspector, and the duties of Water Inspector are in the hands of the Council's Surveyor.

#### (2) *Nursing Arrangements in Area.*

There are two Voluntary Nursing Associations in the District, one for Northam, Westward Ho ! and Orchard Hill ; the other for Appledore. Both Associations employ fully qualified nurses, who also act as midwives.



(3). *Hospitals.*

The District is provided for by the Bideford & District Hospital, which is supported partly by voluntary contributions and partly by patients' fees. The Hospital is available for Medical and Surgical cases and contains about 40 beds.

The Isolation Hospital, situated at East-the-Water, Bideford, provides for infectious cases from the whole of North Devon, and was completed in 1935. It is now in full working order and up-to-date.

(4) *Ambulances.*

There are now in Bideford an up-to-date Motor Ambulance for Bideford and District for non-infectious cases, and an Ambulance in connection with, and kept at, the Isolation Hospital.

(5) *Clinics and Treatment Centres.*

A treatment centre for Venereal Diseases and a Tuberculosis Dispensary are available at Barnstaple for Northam District. Tubercular patients are admitted at Hawley and Hawkmoor Sanatoria.

There is a Maternity and Child Welfare Centre carried on at Appledore under the County Medical Officer of Health.

## 4 – Sanitary Circumstances of the Area.

### *Northam Water Supply.*

The Water Supply is derived from a reservoir draining a large tract of moorland at Melbury, situated in Parkham parish, and about nine miles from Northam. The reservoir holds about thirty million gallons and is generally overflowing during the winter months. Owing to the numerous visitors, including evacuees and military, and to a large increase in the number of new houses erected, it has been found necessary to increase the storage capacity at Melbury and thereby conserve a larger supply for the District. Owing to the war, difficulty has been experienced in carrying out this scheme, and there is likely to be a shortage of water if dry weather prevails. The public are therefore earnestly requested to abstain from waste and to see that leaking taps are repaired as soon as possible.

A periodic analysis, both chemical and bacteriological, of the water is taken as a routine. The 1940 report from the analyst stated that the water is of a satisfactory degree of bacterial and organic purity.

*Rainfall for 1940.*

The Total Rainfall for 1940 was 54·05 inches, compared with 59·96 inches in 1939, and 38·39 inches in the dry year of 1921.

The highest rainfall was 12·69 inches in November, and the lowest ·73 inches in June. These figures are taken at Melbury Water Works (which are about 500 feet above sea level), and are considerably higher than those taken at the Royal North Devon Golf Club at sea level, where 33·49 inches only were registered during the year.

*Drainage and Sewerage.*

The only river affected by sewage is tidal. There is, however, a small stream polluted by sewage water running through the south-west area of Northam District and draining a laundry and over a dozen residences. This stream is now, since the alteration of boundaries, under the control of the Northam Council. Endeavours are still being made to remedy the nuisance by trenching, but sooner or later a £2000 piping scheme may have to be carried out if the present scheme is not satisfactory.

*New Sewer.*

A new sewer, 1500 feet in length, was completed on Appledore Quay during 1940.

*Sanitary Inspection of the Area.*

(a) During the year the Sanitary Inspector made numerous inspections of a sanitary nature, apart from those relating to infectious diseases.

(b) Complaints of nuisances were all remedied after the serving of informal notices.

*Schools.*

There are five Elementary Schools in the District. All were inspected and found to be in a satisfactory condition.

## 5—Inspection and Supervision of Food.

*Milk Supply.*

There are 25 producer retailer dairymen in the District and one retailer only. Frequent samples of milk are taken for analysis. No evidence of Tuberculosis was discovered during the year.

*Bakehouses.*

There are 6 Bakehouses. All were inspected and none were found deficient.

*Slaughterhouses.*

All slaughtering is at present carried out at the Public Abattoir in Bideford.

## 6—Housing

Two hundred and ten houses were inspected during the year under the Public Health or Housing Acts. There was no action taken under statutory powers during the year.

*Number of new houses built during the year.*

(a)	By Sanitary Authority	...	...	...	Nil
(b)	By private effort	...	...	...	10

## 7—Prevention of and control over Infectious Diseases.

During the year 28 cases of Measles, 4 cases of Scarlet Fever, 3 of Diphtheria, and 3 each of Pneumonia and Whooping Cough were notified in the District.

The Scarlet Fever and Diphtheria cases were removed to the Isolation Hospital.

The cleansing and disinfection of infected rooms is carried out personally by the Sanitary Inspector, and in cases where the bedding of necessitous cases has to be destroyed, the Council gives reasonable compensation.

Diphtheria Antitoxin is supplied free by the Council in necessitous cases.

## Tuberculosis

*New Cases and Mortality in the District during 1940.*

Age	NEW CASES				DEATHS
	Respiratory		Non-respiratory		One death of female (respiratory) aged 43.
	M	F	M	F	
4			1		
18-22	4	1			
26-31	2	1			
42-60	3	1			
Total	9	3	1		

Six of the newly notified cases, all respiratory, were visitors to the District.

No action was taken during the year under the Public Health (Prevention of Tuberculosis) Regulations, or under Section 62 of the Public Health Act, 1935, or under Section 172 of the Public Health Act, 1936.



